

On The Trail Of Myles Standish



On your way to the English Lake District or the Highlands of Scotland, you will drive out of London along the M1 and its extension, the M6 motorway, which takes you close to the border of Scotland.

Fifteen miles beyond the Thelwell viaduct which takes the M6 into the County Palatine of Lancaster, and within two miles of the road, is the village of Standish. A few miles north is the industrial town of Chorley.

Thanks to G. Richmond Wight of 58 Bay Rd., the Clipper in this issue gives our readers insight into this historical area.

When you speak of Standish, Chorley and Duxbury, you are speaking of Myles Standish territory.

In 1944, when the Clipper editor was in a writing unit at the Navy Department in Washington, D.C., he missed a bus in front of the department building and had to hitch a ride home to Falls Church, Va. A driver pulled to a polite stop, and once underway, asked where we lived. We said Duxbury, Massachusetts.

"Not really?" he said. "I come from Duxbury, England."

"Then you must know all about Myles Standish."

He half turned and smiled.

"Rather. As a matter of fact, my name is Myles Standish. I stem from the same family as your Miles."

As he went on, we gathered that the migrating Myles did not come from the more aristocratic branch of the family.

But it was an experience, and a few years later, when we corresponded with an official in Chorley, we got closer to the Standish legend. The Clipper published information sent it by a weekly newspaper of the Standish area.

Standish, Chorley and Duxbury were Standish territory for generations of the family which produced the chunky militant who never led an army of more than a dozen soldiers, but was nevertheless an organizing leader who kept the infant Plymouth colony from extinction during that first harsh winter.

Following the 350th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower (Aug. 5, 1970) there was a rekindling of interest in the precise location of Myles's birthplace, Duxbury Hall, near Chorley. Myles named the settlement in Plymouth Colony Duxbury.

In the Nov. 12 issue of the Boston Sunday Globe, there is a fascinating account of the story. The writer, F.E. James, quotes from "The Courtship of Myles Standish," by Longfellow. (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a collateral relative of the Wadsworths of Duxbury, by the way.)

He was a gentleman bold, could trace his pedigree plainly

Back to Hugh Standish of Duxbury Hall in Lancashire, England

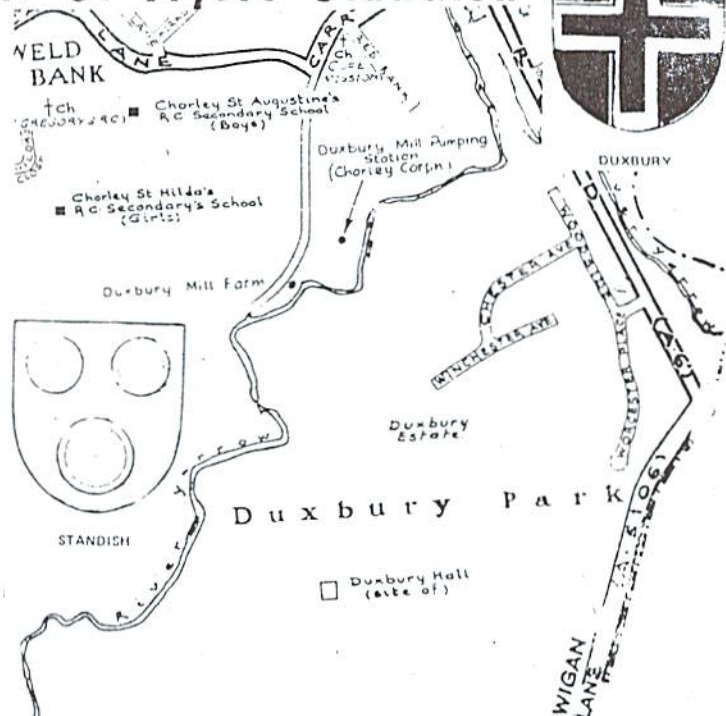
Who was the son of Ralph and the grandson of Thurston de Standish

Hier unto vast estates of which he was falsely defrauded

THE LINKS

The Standish clan were closely linked to the village of Standish, but Myles came from the Duxbury branch of the family, which has more intimate associations with the church of St. Lawrence in Chorley.

The Standish clan were prominent in local and national history both before and after the day when Myles joined the Pilgrims at Sutton Pool in Plymouth enroute to the rock in Plymouth, as the new site was to be named.



PHOTOS, CAPTIONS AND MAP courtesy of Richmond Wight, who with Larry Smith followed the trail of Myles Standish in England last summer.

"On a warm evening in June 1381," writes James, "an ugly confrontation took place at London's Smithfield when the boy King Richard II, son of the great warrior the Black Prince, faced an angry mob of Kentish peasants who were demanding a series of reforms which would have destroyed the entire fabric of the government and society of those times."

"Forty thousand supporters of Wat Tyler stood tense and silent awaiting a signal from their leader which would result in a massacre of the King and his retinue. The peasant leader's mood was dark and menacing and as he made his demands he toyed like a boy with a naked dagger, throwing it from one hand to the other."

Then Wat Tyler lashed out against London Mayor William Walworth, unaware that Walworth was clad in armor under his robe. The mayor finished off Tyler with his short broad sword, which ended the peasants' revolt; at the same time the King's Squire at Arms, Ralph Standish, pierced Tyler with his sword.

Today in Standish church a modern window depicts the story of how Ralph Standish helped save the life of his king, an act which earned him a knighthood and the custody of a castle.

STILL THERE

For generations after the sailing of the Mayflower, the Standish family owned estates in Lancashire, during a time of

turbulence and political upheaval. A man's loyalty to an unsuccessful cause could lead to loss of property, punishment and death.

Writes James: "It was inevitable that the family, supporters of the Stuart cause, would be caught up in the tide of events. Standish Hall -- now taken away to America -- became the headquarters of a plot to overturn the government and William Standish narrowly escaped capture when his involvement in the affair was brought to light."

"He sought refuge at a neighboring farm where a dairy maid kept him hidden. There were many Stuart sympathizers in the area and among them the landlord of the inn Eagle and Child who overheard the plans of the pursuers who were drinking at the inn. They suspected that William was at the farm but the landlord was able to send a warning on ahead."

During the search, the blade of a sword just missed William, who was hiding in a closet.

Chorley is a drab mill town, typical of the industrial revolution. It also boasts a world famous art collection. The patron was Henry Tate of Chorley, who endowed the Tate Gallery in London.

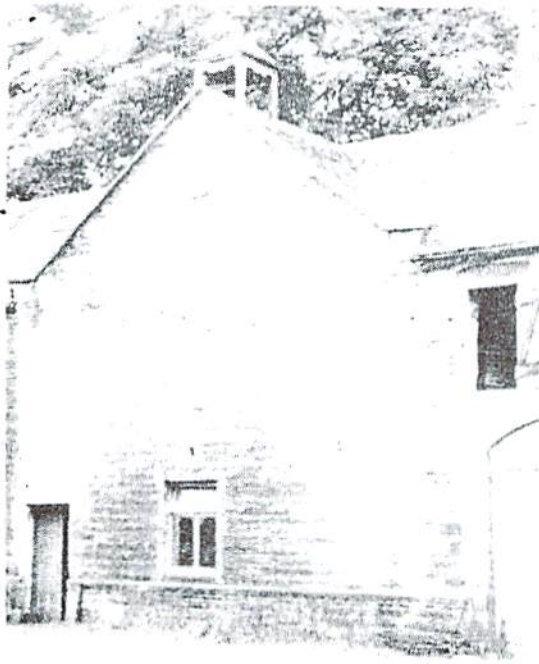
After the demolition of Duxbury Hall, where Myles Standish was probably born, the extant memorials of the Standish family were preserved in

the parish church of St. Lawrence.

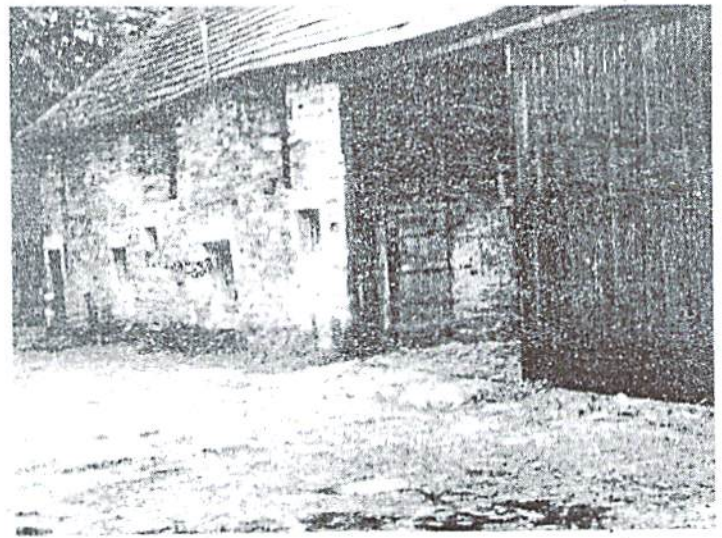
Still there is the impressive Standish pew. In the 18th century the Knight (Ralph) and his Lady had canopied thrones, while the rest of the Standish clan sat on cushioned seats.

According to James, the Stars and Stripes now hang in the South Aisle of the church, a reminder that American servicemen stationed around Chorley visited the church because of its association with the Myles Standish who came to the New World.

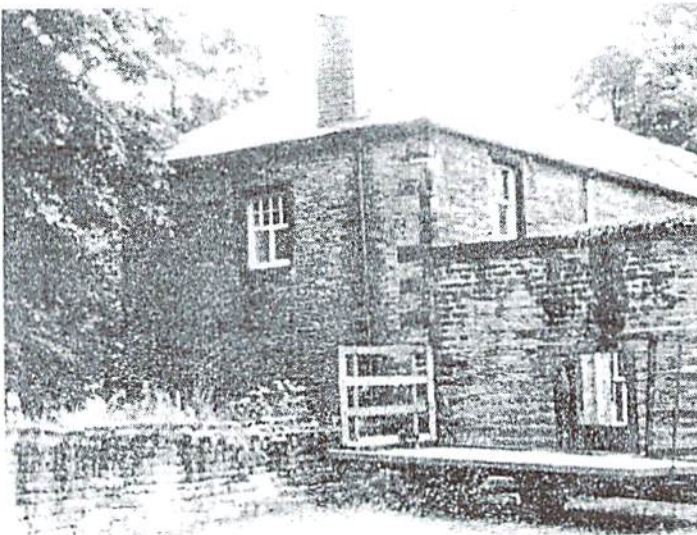
Myles maintained that he had been robbed of his inheritance. Church registers offer no written proof of his rights to estates which he left in his will to his son, Alexander. Allegations of deliberate defacement of the captain's baptismal entry on page 39 were made by the agent for the descendants of Myles Standish who had subscribed for an investigation into the Duxbury properties, but this is one more story about Myles Standish that will never fully be told.



Main part of quarters for men who worked on the farm.



Hay barn built in early 1600's has never been updated except for roof.



This wall runs around entire compound, 65 acres. A narrow river flow through the property.



This gate house was built in early 1700's and is now occupied. Notice Standish coat of arms on pediment.